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REMARKS

The Examiner objected to claim 1 because of informalities. Claim 1 is hereby amended. Claims 4 and 5 have been added. Claims 1 and 3-5 remain pending. Reconsideration and reexamination of the application are requested.

The Examiner objected to claim 1 because of an informality. The informality has been corrected.

The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Wallner et al. (US 6,220,625). The Examiner rejected claim 1 under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Aoki et al. (US 6,843,502). Wallner discloses three u-shaped chambers, such that an upright leg of two of the u-shaped chambers is inclined relative to a pillar of the vehicle.

Aoki discloses various embodiments. The embodiment of Fig. 3 has cells which are non-parallel (see column 3, lines 43-44). The cell 28c, 28d is an irregular u-shape where the legs of the u are substantially aligned with the pillar.

Claim 1 has been amended to more clearly define the at least two adjacent ones of the cells such that they have "lower ends ending at a lower end of the curtain". It is applicant's position that neither Wallner nor Aoki disclose at least two adjacent ones of the cells inflated along an inner surface of a pillar having axes thereof extending parallel with each other such that said adjacent ones of the cells each comprise an upper portion which extends from the gas distribution path downwardly in a vertical direction, and a lower portion which extends from the upper portion in a direction inclined with respect to both of an extension direction of the pillar and the vertical direction. Further, neither Wallner nor Aoki disclose the lower ends of at least two adjacent ones of the cells ending at a lower end of the curtain. Rather, Wallner and Aoki disclose u-shaped cells.

As discussed in the specification, the lower ends of said adjacent cells are not trapped by the associated pillar, and this enables a smooth deployment of the airbag when necessary. Further, the inclining of the cell direction as defined by claim 1 prevents the head of an occupant of the vehicle from coming into a region between two adjacent cells

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where the effects of impact absorption are low at a time when a side collision has been made. Therefore, the system as required by claim 1 secures the effective impact absorption performance.

It is further pointed out that since at least two adjacent ones of a plurality of cells of an airbag according to the invention of claim 1 have axes extending parallel with each other, the gas generated upon a vehicle collision flows in the same direction through the adjacent cells thereby enabling the airbag to be deployed swiftly and reliably. Additionally, the upper portions of the adjacent cells extend from the gas distribution path, downwardly in a vertical direction, so that in an initial stage of deployment of the airbag, gas can flow through the upper portions of the adjacent cells vertically downward, thereby enabling a swift deployment of the airbag.

In contradistinction, not only do the cells of Fig. 5 of Wallner not provide an upper portion which extend from the gas distribution path downwardly in a vertical direction, but the cells in Fig. 5 of Wallner are connected at their lower ends so as to define the letter U. Similarly, as indicated earlier, the cell 28c, 28d of Aoki is an irregular U-shape. When cells are connected together in such U-shape, gas flowing into one cell may then flow into another cell at the lower end, i.e., such flow results in a direction of flow reversed from the normal flow direction. This may result undesirably in lowering the intended affect of the airbag.

Thus, it is submitted that neither Wallner nor Aoki disclose the structure as indicated and therefore do not anticipate claims 1 and 3. Furthermore, the references do not point to structure claimed. Claims 1 and 3 are patentable.

Claims 4 and 5 have been added. Claim 4 is supported by cells 21c of Fig. 8. Cells 21c are positioned sidewardly of front seat 11 as shown in Figs. 1 and 2. The front seat 11 is usually constructed to be slideable in the front and rear direction of the vehicle. The inflatable portion of the airbag facing the side of the front seat should therefore be of a large volume to provide the effect desired regardless of where the seat is in the front and rear direction. That is, the seat is always sidewardly of the inflatable portion of the airbag when it is deployed.

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Claim 5 finds basis in Figs. 2 and 3 and in the specification page 5, line 4 to page 6, line 2. Because non-inflatable portions are formed between respective inflatable portions of the airbag, the volume of airbag to be inflated can be minimized so that the merits of the airbag as discussed above are realized.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and reexamination of the application is requested. Early issuance of a notice of allowance of claims 1 and 3-5 is solicited. Any questions regarding this communication can be directed to the undersigned attorney, Curtis B. Hamre, Reg. No. 29,165 at (612) 455-3802.

Respectfully submitted,



HAMRE, SCHUMANN, MUELLER &
LARSON, P.C.
P.O. Box 2902-0902
Minneapolis, MN 55402-0902
(612) 455-3800

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By: Curtis B. Hamre
Curtis B. Hamre
Reg. No. 29,165
CBH/nel